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Organizational Aesthetics: The Artful Firm and the Aesthetic Moment in Organization and Management Theory

Josef Chytry

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Aesthetics has invariably hovered at the edge of the product and the commodity.[1] Yet the allure of aesthetics has proved generally more seductive to those critics of the overall system of capitalism who hoped for an age of the product that, freed from the constraints of commodity-formation, would resemble the oeuvres generally expected from the professions classified as arts, crafts, and design. In turn, these professions long regarded the language of aesthetics as the official judge of value-claims. Although those judgments have become in time far more attenuated since the formal origins of 'aesthetics' in the eighteenth century, they have left behind exemplars which the theorists of business and management apparently at long last intend to exploit.[2]

Two questions immediately arise. Why? And, what is the 'aesthetic object' that is being groomed on behalf of the answer to that 'why'? The works that have primarily stimulated the thinking behind this essay have all come up within the last half-decade or so. Prior to them there was already a growing literature in the late 1970s and 1980s that sought to add an aesthetic seasoning to the managerial dish, in some cases possibly reflecting crossovers between systems theory and management concerns.[3] Still, granted a time-lag of one to two years from completion to publication, it is highly probable that these more recent works represent the crest of the dot.com prosperity of the 1990s. Yet to make them the chance product of a passing decade would be to mistake the significance of these works, and indeed their worth. For the most part, these are intelligent ventures at finding bridges between the world of aesthetics and the world of the corporation. If 'beautiful corporations' and the coming of the 'aesthetic manager' and 'art firm' as well as 'artful making' for an 'Age of Aesthetics' and 'Aesthetic Universe' are probably not in the cards, it is no rebuke to these efforts that they have striven to imagine how the future might be so. After all, even a failure to predict that future could help tell us why aesthetics and business might not be automatically such potential marital partners as these authors keenly hope. To that extent, such works might have something to say to the need for business itself to metamorphose into something substantially different if it wishes to draw on the 'authentically' aesthetic.

At the core of the difficulties in much of this literature is the unproblematic confidence with which it often moves between categories belonging to the aesthetic in general and those directed more closely to art and the artwork. While it might be helpful at times to minimize such distinctions in order to encourage innovative readings of the phenomena under consideration, it might be no less helpful at other times to

clarify the differences involved in these two related areas of discourse. In the following survey of the relevant literature, this paper will try both to highlight unique features of those works and keep to the overriding purpose of an overall critique attached to issues involved in the distinctions between the aesthetic in general and the artwork. Following the criterion of focusing on settings 'where aesthetics is the operative management theory for the enterprise',[4] our inquiry will be guided by the sort of narrative that has made organizational aesthetics into a subject of some viability, as well as one that, as presently articulated, could still do with some fundamental correctives and refinements -- something we provide at the end with a consideration of the philosophical implications of art and the artwork.

1

John Dobson's *The Art of Management and the Aesthetic Manager* sets out probably the most comprehensive overview of both the historical and the prescriptive priorities behind these texts. Dobson helpfully posits a theory of three stages of development from (1) the 'given' of the conventional twentieth-century firm with its fixation on a technicity geared towards standards of maximum aggregate wealth and shareholder wealth maximization, through (2) the challenge of business ethics that sets up the 'enlightened agent' for 'the moral firm', to, finally, (3) the manager 'as artisan' reconfiguring as the 'aesthetic manager' who generates the 'Aesthetic Universe' at the *telos* of Dobson's particular reading.

For all the stimulating case studies with which Dobson peppers his text – from Pepsi Cola in Burma, Shell in the mid-Atlantic, to Nike in Vietnam – the key influence to his project is the 'virtue ethics' of Alasdair MacIntyre and its indebtedness to classical Aristotelian philosophy.[5] Without MacIntyre's encouragement, Dobson would probably never have dared go so far as to posit 'the aesthetic firm as a *polis*' and to underscore that 'this aesthetic pursuit of personal excellence is only possible within an organization that approximates a *polis*.'[6] Not that Dobson is under any illusions that MacIntyre's ethical philosophy has much of direct import to offer business theory. Dobson simply seeks to capture McIntyre's far more comprehensive sense for ethicality by invoking as his own standards for the firm an 'all-inclusive excellence' and 'a holistic quest for excellence' (Dobson 1999: 143).[7] Clearly such standards, formally anyway, trump the business ethicists; and the moment that such wording joins the discourse we find ourselves flirting with 'pre-modern' priorities of the Renaissance where business, management and art presumably conspired to fashion far more 'creative' organizations and productivities.[8]

Dobson's optimism is catchy and the attentive reader would hope that he comes up with answers to two central concerns. The first is whether his teleology in fact provides sufficient empirical support for what he claims to be a descriptive, and not just a prescriptive, statement regarding an inevitable union of aesthetics and business.[9] Unfortunately Dobson does not provide sufficient evidence of such inevitability, or for that matter of sustainability. The prediction itself seems to depend on a general recognition of what the technical literature labels the M-form type of firm transforming itself into far less vertically-oriented operational structures (of which the 1980s adulation of Japanese firm structure was but one passing phase). To argue, as does business historian Alfred D. Chandler in his studies of the evolution of the American firm, that due to massive internal growth as well as increasing international competition the modern firm since the 1960s and 1970s has had to restructure simpler versions of the M-form through diversification, divestiture, mergers and acquisitions is certainly to acknowledge the significance of strategic corporate restructuring in the recent course of firm history.[10] But perhaps a 'technical' problem -- the manner in which the modern firm is to remain viable and competitive -- can be, and is being, dealt with technically without needing or presupposing intervention from the ethical.

And, second, how far are Dobson and MacIntyre themselves to be counted on the side of the aesthetic -- and the polis? Even if he himself does grant the primacy of the 'aesthetic' for any final solution, Dobson seems to be far too generous to MacIntyre. Notwithstanding MacIntyre's strategic invocations of the polis against the technicists, MacIntyre's own thought remains closer to what Dobson (1999: 151) labels 'Thomistic business', that is, a business ethics that, however much nurtured in classical Greek and Aristotelian philosophy, took Christian leave through Augustine to formulate Scholastic priorities that were never more than tangentially sympathetic to the pre-Christian classical world of the polis.[11] MacIntyre, who is in fact quite honest about his preference for the scholastic revaluation of classical ethics, in no way upholds the aesthetic or the artistic, nor for that matter does his philosophical hero Thomas Aquinas. Dobson, by contrast, is drawn to the civic humanism of Renaissance thinkers and practitioners for whom Thomistic solutions, along with medieval Scholasticism in general, were anathema in the distinctly artisanly and business environments of Renaissance Florence and Venice[12]. Lacking MacIntyre's theoretical support for this very different alternative, Dobson is reduced to rather bare approaches to the 'essence' of the aesthetic as he argues 'that there is no absolute criterion' and that 'there is no single answer, no rule, no dictum that can be applied' (1999: 174, 173) – formulations that are basically, as Dobson himself admits, little more than variants on an increasingly outdated postmodern ideology. Dobson is to be congratulated for providing the literature with a most stimulating narrative and historical framework, but if there is to be 'the birth of beautiful business' (ibid: 175) – the last words literally of Dobson's book – something in addition to Dobson's version à la MacIntyre of an aesthetic universe is needed.

2

On its face, Antonio Strati's *Organization and Aesthetics* would seem to be that indispensable supplement. Clearly saturated in the literature of philosophical aesthetics, Strati has no hesitation in claiming – correctly – that the eighteenth-century revolution in aesthetics is 'one of the greatest upheavals in the paradigm that defines humankind' (1999: 119).[13] Strati's 'aesthetic approach to organizations' means to prioritize the 'aesthetic' element in organizational life. He defines as 'aesthetic' the entire range of 'sensory and perceptive faculties', 'sensible' experiences, indeed 'all the human senses', thus stressing the pathic, *em*pathic forms of understanding not only with regard to the object proper but also to the researcher or investigator who is expected to refine 'his or her own perceptive and sensory abilities' in the course of any such inquiry.[14] Traditionally the aes-

thetic approach has celebrated 'beauty' as the 'principal aesthetic category', and Strati himself admits that his own research has been empirically guided by the category of the beautiful, but he quickly denies that it is intrinsically more important than a host of other aesthetic categories. Strati himself provides the following list in addition to the beautiful: the ugly, sublime, gracious, tragic, pictaresque, ironic, and holy (or 'sacred') (Strati 1999: 115).[15] This broader canvas for the topic of the appropriate 'object' of the aesthetic approach intends to encourage a much more pluralistic respect for the wide-ranging role of the aesthetic in human and organizational life, and could even be said to follow the spirit of the larger trajectory of the aesthetic as originally formulated in the eighteenth century.[16]

Difficulties, however, arise when Strati wishes, on the one hand, to underscore that the aesthetic approach to management is due to the philosophical tradition of aesthetics and art rather than to organization theory proper, but, on the other hand, wants his 'aesthetic' researcher to accept at face value the 'aesthetic' comments of his interviewees rather than attach them to some overriding formal aesthetics. In point of fact, Strati's 'empirical' data consist of inferences drawn from a series of impressionistic summaries offered by organization participants bracketed within the conditions and premises of their own discursivities.[17] From Strati's perspective, a fully evolved 'organizational aesthetics' would reflect the formalized results of such free-wheeling – and 'empathic' – inquiries into the variety of ways in which the minds and bodies of organizational participants articulate – both verbally and non-verbally – their unique sensory and imaginal experiences as members of an organization. Ultimately Strati hopes to turn his agenda into an academic revival of what he calls the 'mythical thinking' that he traces back to his *mezzogiorno* compatriot Giambattista Vico (Strati 1999: 151-155), mythical thinking being understood as presumably everything that post-Cartesian cognitivist and rationalist thinking is not.

Yet Strati's specific agenda only fitfully accords with the priority of the aesthetic and the artful firm. The choice of test cases may reflect Strati's aesthetically ecumenical standards but, at least as communicated through Strati's summations, these test cases offer little more than a sequence of narrations on which very little theoretical substance can be forged. Strati dismisses any call for control factors and a modicum of statistical patterns as vestiges of an outdated 'cognitive-rationalist' modeling, but his own characters remain restricted to their own articulated pathos.[18] Indeed, Strati's reiterations that he is not looking for a 'rational explanation of organizational phenomena'[19] may betray something of an ideological bent behind this entire line of inquiry: like Dobson, Strati's text seems methodologically committed to postmodern discursivities. Yet, although this commitment to the celebrated democratic randomness of postmodern narrations would suggest a healthy skepticism toward *any* possible set of theoretical priorities, Strati is quick to take sides in favor of postmodern hostility toward 'strong ontology' and the latter's presumed 'assumptions of rationality and normativity' (Strati 1999: 192, 178). The organization, however, which might follow Strati's critiqued 'cognitive-rational' bent could legitimately claim its own 'aesthetic', namely, the minimalist and functionalist aesthetic of radical modernism in the early decades of the twentieth century -- even if such 'aesthetics' are unpalatable to Stratis' postmodern priorities.[20] Strati may not wish to recognize such readings in the chasm he has hewn between the 'sensuous' and the 'cognitive-rational', but his approach has after all committed him to the discovery of the aesthetic element *wherever* any organization as such exists.

Despite these qualifications, Strati has added considerably to the level of theorizing on the artful firm. Still, in the long run the theme of the artful firm calls for something perhaps more effectively normative than this particular variant of organizational aesthetics. On the one hand, the key aesthetic object, 'beauty', which Strati prefers to relegate to an equal status with a host of other such objects, deserves its own centrality in theory, since what makes this signifier 'beauty' (or: 'bellezza', 'Schönheit', '**καλά**') worth entertaining – both 'imaginally' and 'synaesthetically' – is the degree to which proximity to the adventus of the foam-born Beloved is being promised.[21] If that promise is broken or, for that matter, not even under consideration, the entire verbal sophistication to which Strati's 'organizational aesthetics' is committed will yield rather flimsy dividends. And, on the other hand, instead of just taking for granted the existence of the aesthetic among members of any organizational structure and activity, it might make more sense to highlight exactly those organizations, or elements within organizations, which, at least on the surface, are purposefully engaged in the formation of art-, aesthetic- or artful firms.[22]

Both conditions are met by a work that in its aesthetics, art-firm empirics, and sheer brio of personal and objective narration sets a new standard for this genre of work.

3

Pierre Guillet de Monthoux's *The Art Firm* is in important ways a realization of Strati's call for the new researcher who both widens and embodies a synaesthetic approach to the aesthetic element in organizations. The author's flair for the occasional rhetorical grand gesture should not put off the conventional academic reader since Guillet de Monthoux is, in his own right, a considerable producer of 'aesthetic energy', as he himself coins it, whose work furnishes a matchless body of sheer information in the number of historical candidates potentially qualifying as embodiments of the 'art firm'.[23] Backed by an original and incisive reading into perhaps the most salient tradition of aesthetic thinking – the German theorists Schiller, Kant, and their post-Kantian heirs – *The Art Firm* makes up the one necessary text for our theme.

Guillet de Monthoux writes as a man with a vision: 'Dionysus Inc.', an art firm grounded in what he calls 'aesthetic philosophy' and its unique 'metaphysics' (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: xii). Inspired to this vision by what he correctly sees as the increasing prominence of art and aesthetics in management literature, Guillet de Monthoux makes directly for the most promising fusion of the aesthetic and the social, indeed political, in classical aesthetics: the German poet-philosopher Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794-1795).[24] According to Guillet de Monthoux, 'Schiller awakened my desire for a learned kind of management' (2004: 20): Schiller's account of human drives prioritizes what Schiller dubbed the 'play drive' (*Spieltrieb*) inherent in all humans, inspiring Guillet de Monthoux to forge a management aesthetic based on what he himself describes as the 'oscillation' or *Schwung*

central to this play drive. For both Schiller and his epistemological guide Immanuel Kant,[25] the redemptive feature of the aesthetic was its liberation of human faculties into an open play in which no single faculty gains domination over the others. Both Schiller and Kant valorized the moment of this 'free play' of faculties as encouragement for developing the multiple dimensions of human thought, sensibility and imagination. Taking what he learned from Kant, Schiller then applied such speculation to human drives which he summarized into a basic 'form drive' and 'sense drive', the solution to which one-sidedness must be found in a 'play drive'.[26]

Armed with these provocative ideas, Guillet de Monthoux wades through a thick body of supportive theory – the German Idealist F.W.J. Schelling's concept of genius, Friedrich Nietzsche as the 'technician of speed' (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 59) whose 'Dionysian' reading of art supports Richard Wagner's theatrical experimentations, and even (to step momentarily outside the German ambit) the democratic aesthetics of the American pragmatist John Dewey[27] – all the while testing his Schillerian intuition that *Schwung* can furnish the most effective, while malleable, aesthetic standard for his 'art firm'. He points out that what these writings have added to the basic aesthetics of Kant and Schiller is a 'network of players' (ibid: 75) that enriches the so far bare account of *Schwung*, thus showing that -- following the hermeneutic thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer -- art is about the dynamics of social action imbedded in the production of art. For Guillet de Monthoux, art must be 'managed', indeed some kind of 'organization' is always necessary, but mere organization is not enough. Accordingly the 'network of players' must widen to embrace both market and audience to yield a 'Gadamerian' truth-table made up of the interaction of the four essential 'players' for 'art': the technician, artist, audience, and critic (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 79 and diagram).

Art seen as simultaneously management and creation nevertheless runs two major risks. The first is *totalization*, in which art activity is collapsed into the totalitarian demands of a cause, ideology, political monolith, such as fascism, nazism, or soviet communism, along with their apologists such as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. The second – the apparent escape from such totalization – is the 'big bang of *banalization*' in which all four 'players' break off into their private realms of narcissism to generate 'infantocratic' art worlds of the modern scene, such as Andy Warhol and comparable 'continuous celebrity' campaigns (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 91-93).[28]

Concentrating on examples drawn from the 'theatrical enterprises of the last two centuries' in France, Germany, and Sweden, Guillet de Monthoux (2004: xiii) comes up with what he regards as five authentic versions of the art firm: *avant-garde enterprises, artistic companies, art corporations, flux firms*, and *postmodern performances* (ibid: 318).[29] *Avant-garde enterprises*, and indeed the launching of the art firm as a whole, owe everything to the inspiration of Richard Wagner, 'the pioneer of the modern art enterprise' (ibid: 121), and are all about the creation and maintenance of his Bayreuth temple to art: fan clubs, spa atmosphere, unique auditorium, educational seminars, all directed toward bringing together the experience of the arts into a single collective art-work (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) (ibid: 121).[30] *Artistic companies* are organizations as 'regular' private companies, often public joint-stock, with largely didactic aims ideally suited for capturing surplus value from the space (the 'subtext') between original scripts and actual stage events.[31] *Art corporations* constitute the 'incorporation of art as a socioeconomic institution' into 'state-financed networks of public theaters and art space' (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 202), an option that obviously works best in those European state systems geared toward social democratic political practices.[32] *Flux firms*, as the name implies, represent the kind of event innovations associated with the postwar fluxus avant-garde movement and the antics of one of its cult-heroes Joseph Beuys,[33] from whose frenetic activity emerges a number of associations, parties, and groups, the most prominent of which was perhaps the invention of the German Green Party in 1979.[34] Finally, *postmodern (postmod) performances* encapsulate the theatrical-performative experiments beginning in East Germany under the direction of such theatrico-entrepreneurs as Frank Castorf who turned its Volksbühne into an arena for infiltrating traditional (if radical) drama with the peculiar 'Dionysian' flare of rock concerts as well as the postmod multimedia reservoirs of movies and records and the glitz of modern marketing and advertising techniques.[35]

Eventually Guillet de Monthoux (2004: 354) thinks he has found his '2002 update of the Gadamerian model' in a *Cittadellarte* founded by the Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto in the latter's home town of Biella (near Turin) where an old factory compound has been transformed into UNIDEE, 'a university for ideas'. Drawing on art students engaged in 'socially responsible art' projects, UNIDEE confirms the author's intuition of a future in which the art firm will act as the 'middle position' for the mixing of media, finance, management, and culture – the 'open space' afforded between 'media-culture and finance-management' (ibid: 351, 354) – under the aegis of the artist as aesthetic philosopher.

This closing vision is inspiring indeed, and it is good to note that Pistoletto himself points back to the Renaissance *botteghe* for his inspiration (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 353). Still, it does not follow that *Cittadellarte* is (as yet) its actualization – certainly not from the sparsity of the somewhat euphoric-pilgrimatory rhetoric of Guillet de Monthoux's conclusion. In order to supply additional pragmatic content, it is all the more necessary to push the author's optimism in the directions he provides. These directions may be listed under the following headings: (1) the theatrical metaphor and (2) the open-space metaphor, the former inclining toward the performative, while the latter inclines toward the designal and architectural.

4

Joseph Pine and James Gilmore's *The Experience Economy* -- along with Bernd Schmitt, David Rogers and Karen Vrotsos' *There's No Business That's Not Show Business* -- and Robert Austin and Lee Devin's *Artful Making* prioritize theatre and the stage for their management recommendations.[36] Between these two sets of works, Guillet de Monthoux seemingly prefers the latter, since he relegates Pine and Gilmore, at least, to an example of banalization (Guillet de Monthoux 2004: 317-318) and includes among his colleagues one co-author of Austin and Devin.[37] Still, Pine and Gilmore -- as well as Schmitt, Rogers and Vrotsos -- make good sense by stressing the historical emergence of what they dub the 'experience economy' and 'experience culture'.

What rightly strikes Pine and Gilmore is

the proliferation of enterprises which are not simply concerned with consumption of goods and services, but with the offer of a total experience, as exemplified by theme parks of which the exemplar remains Disneyland/Disney World. This 'fourth' economic offering – after commodities, goods, and services – provides (for a price) 'a series of memorable events that a company stages – as in a theatrical play – to engage' the consumer 'in a personal way' (Pine & Gilmore 1999: 2). What is key to the 'experience' is the degree to which it is 'memorable' for the individual through his or her immersion and interactive participation. This 'experience economy' has become increasingly central as a result of technology, rising affluence, concomitant changes in the sense of economic value, and the increase in competitive intensity (ibid: 5). Although connected with entertainment, experience as understood by Pine and Gilmore transcends it through stressing not only an entertainment component, but also education, escapism, and explicitly aesthetic rewards, the purpose being to let one's 'guest' (the authors' gentle term for the consumer) be free to be in the experience and thus undergo that personalized intensity which makes experience memorable (ibid: 31-40).

Hence Pine and Gilmore's punchline: if these four realms are brought into a single setting, then any plain space turns into a space appropriate for 'staging an experience' (1999: 42).[38] This sense toward a generic and 'mnemonic space' explains why for the experience economy 'work is theatre' (Pine & Gilmore 1999: 101), since theatre captures the dramaturgical character of the enterprise; accordingly, it is to the practices of drama and dramaturgy that the experience manager should turn in order to create – as, conventionally, does formal drama – the memorably staged experience. Ultimately there is no clear line for distinguishing between an exemplary two-hour performance of King Lear and a FedEx 'overnight performance' (ibid: 161).

Pine and Gilmore's exploitations of theatrical performative clues for management practices contain some stimulating insights and tips, but, as we shall see, Austin and Devin furnish a more developed management understanding of the theatre metaphor. What remains worth noting regarding the particularities of the Pine and Gilmore approach is the degree to which they regard the experience economy stage as itself merely a transition to a more sophisticated -- and desirable -- stage. This ultimate level they call a 'transformation economy' to be presumably guided no longer by 'experience stagers' but by 'transformation eliciters' (Pine & Gilmore 1999: 186).[39] Instead of paying for a single experience as in the case of the experience-economy level, customers are given a '*series* of experiences' (ibid: 165) designed to elicit self-transformations. If the experience economy was exemplified by Disneyland and Rainforest Cafes, the transformation economy resembles the long-term offerings of the martial arts, nutrition management, reading transformations, and higher education. Indeed, at this visionary summit Pine and Gilmore drop all timidity and reveal 'transformation eliciters' -- and themselves -- to be engaged in something far more comprehensive: a life of service for which the true key is to be found in the teachings of Jesus and Paul (ibid: 182-183). Once we are about transformations and inner selves, then commerce becomes a matter of universal moral choice and knowledge is designed to produce a 'wisdom technology' (ibid: 189). To be perfectly frank: transformation is inevitably 'spiritual transformation' and our 'purpose is to glorify God and to encourage others to do the same.' (ibid: 195). After all, where have we come to but the call of Jesus to 'preach the gospel' as the ultimate in 'strategic intents' in our concern for the care of ourselves and of others (ibid: 202)?[40]

Fortunately for the theme of an 'experience economy', Schmitt, Rogers, and Vrotsos provide some secular relief to Pine and Gilmore's excesses by extending the more salient aspects of the concept into their more professional reading of an 'experience culture'. Schmitt, who already contributed in an earlier book to the understanding of aesthetics for marketing,[41] argues, along with his co-authors, that show business practices can augment management's exploitation of the range of experiences available for marketing products in this emerging experience culture, and provides a heady set of examples. Besides some fascinating looks at the business of cooking and the art business, the authors single out Las Vegas as the most striking example of an entire municipality functioning according to the precepts of such an experience culture. Indeed, Las Vegas, they aver, is 'the real capital of the United States'. The usual model of a modern democracy, the U.S. 'is now quite clearly the worldwide source of entertainment ideas. Entertainment is, in fact, one of the great democratic experiences the U.S. has to offer'.[42]

Still, it is with Austin and Devin that one is furnished a more forthright and ultimately practicable account of the relevance of theatre for management.[43] Although modest for not only warning that 'artful making' – in contrast to the more conventional 'industrial making' – is not the best option in every case but also that the prerequisites for choosing either option 'are firm, no 'ifs' or 'maybes' about them' (Austin & Devin 2003: 45), Austin and Devin do see something fundamentally topical about artful making for the present stage of economic development. If their basic proposal is that the 'activities of a wise manager ...need not be much different from those of a theatre director' because 'the collaborative art of theatre, and particularly rehearsal, as an enabling metaphor', is the most apt one to this level of development (ibid: 162, 167), artful making can be expected to play a growing role in the age of information economy, granted the latter's strategic making and agile software development.[44] Drawing on a three-stage history marked by agricultural, industrial and now information or knowledge phases (ibid: 54), the authors see artful making as uniting 'industrial making's' advantages of working through cheap and rapid iteration transactions with 'ancient making's' capacity to customize.

If Pine and Gilmore extracted Drama, Script, Theatre, and final Performance from their dramaturgical gambit, Austin and Devin in their turn come up with: Release, Collaboration, Ensemble, and Play. Instead of conventional restraints on original thinking and fluid collaboration by workers, the rehearsal process of theatre can teach business managers to stress 'emergence', allowing product thinking to 'emerge' spontaneously from the process of making. Rejumbling familiar business vocabularies, the authors insistently downplay even such apparently 'innovative' themes as 'experimentation' and instead model behaviors resembling what really happens in theatre rehearsals where ambiguity, iteration, and exploration sustain the kind of 'high uncertainty' which generates 'creation' and 'reconceiving'. Willing to risk the prospect of matters spinning 'out of control', Austin and Devin call for a 'control through release' where all parties achieve an almost

simultaneous sense of release and focus.[45] Given that artists and actors are famously unresponsive to coercion, it behooves this 'artful manager' to give free rein to 'reconceiving' and 'spontaneity' – just as does the director – in treading the fine line between such 'control through release' and an 'anything goes' policy (Austin & Devin 2003: 95, 97, 98).[46]

Once 'emergence' occurs through the management equivalent of 'rehearsal', we advance to 'collaboration' – a state in which participants have been released from the usual constraints of vanity, inhibitions, and preconceptions. We then move on to the conception of 'ensemble', the quality of collaborative work in which the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts and inspires a level of productive interchange which the authors do not hesitate to label 'a kind of artwork' (Austin & Devin 2003: 128-129, 131). Finally, the level of 'play', a concept invaluable for suggesting both a quality and an event, is seen through the conventional theatrical metaphor that the 'act of making a play *is* the play', suggesting that a business product should be analogously 'redefined as the experience of its action with customers, an interaction in which both product and customers vary over time' (ibid: 170, emphasis in original).[47] The authors close with the final promise that like actors, workers who have achieved such a 'play' level of awareness will share with artists an identification with their work 'for the sake of doing their work'. In other words, they will have discovered the 'ultimate purpose' and the 'final cause' of artful making as such, namely, 'the joy of working for the sake of doing the work, of *work as Play*' (ibid: 180, emphasis added).[48]

In reviewing Austin and Devin's enterprise as a whole, one cannot but hope that the authors are on the right track given the attractions of a 'work-as-play' vision for the economic and product-making future. Nonetheless, it is worth voicing some concerns. First, Austin and Devin's theoretical dependence on an economic dialectics that assumes the return of more originative patterns within newer configurations may be unmerited. Whereas, for them, ancient making as such furnished the model of the craft manufacturer, the 'art' metaphor regarded by the authors as more relevant to the information economy is dramaturgy and the theatrical arts, a shift that is not backed by a comparable genealogy of its origins and development throughout human time. Second, the authors' version of the theatre vocation depends on 'ideal' accounts of what theatre, actors, and directors habitually do to such an extent that the authors themselves must occasionally intervene in their own narrative to admit that in practice theatrical professions will fall short of such ideal practices (e.g. Austin & Devin 2003: 119, 134, 177-178). But if that is the case, why should business management not invoke its own 'ideal' standards of honest product-making and exemplary firm performances in the more traditional manner?[49] And third, the authors are unclear on the implications of their approach to the meaning of 'profit' as such. They seem confident that a process that has culminated in their version of Play for workers unleashes a state of felicity, collaboration, and good feelings which should surmount any particular shortcomings of the success of their resultant product on the market, but then they want to promise an ultimate 'profit' at some stage to keep that felicity and creative spirit going. On its face this seems as difficult to accept as it would be in any realistic assessment of the professional decisions by directors, actors, and sundry other participants in the formal theatrical process and vocation. More clarification in this respect is needed, and the odds are that it will be furnished through the standard arenas of formal economic and management theory.

Still, any theorizing about value creation in general should benefit greatly from drawing on the theatre metaphors so ably championed by Austin and Devin – as well as, to a lesser extent, by Pine and Gilmore and Schmitt, Rogers, and Vrotsos. Such theorizing will also want to look into our final area of aesthetic readings of management and business enterprises, namely, the spaces opened out by design and architecture.

5

Of our final two selections, it must be forewarned that Paul Dickinson's *Beautiful Corporations* is painfully replete with propositional embarrassments.[50] Nonetheless, appraisal of this precious collaboration between author and designer can serve as focus for a tendency among the contemporary design industry to claim as its own the presumably coming age of 'a new beauty' (Dickinson 2000: 98). As in comparable cases, its argument for an historic alliance between aesthetics and organization comes down to the critical role that design is playing today in competitive advantage, particularly as it addresses 'corporate identity' and 'brand'.[51]

For Dickinson the 'beautiful corporation', certainly the beautiful corporation of the future, will be impelled by Dickinson's key direction: 'sustainability product marketing'.[52] Dickinson envisages this futuristic firm to be committed to care, environmentality, a humane attitude toward employees, the assumption that customers are intelligent, and the maintenance of a 'higher' tone overall. Put together such a world of beautiful enterprises should yield a 'Mozart economy' (Dickinson 2000: 98). To this purpose his companies will exert all their resources in design, advertising, tone and even ergonomics to further the standard of sustainable development, defined as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (ibid: 100). Dickinson advocates Peter Downing's 'sky-blue corporate social reporting' which measures economic performance not only by the usual economic indicators but also by bringing in environmental performance and social impact reports for the company's 'stakeholders', the latter term covering the entire panoply of groupings – not just shareholders – involved in company production all the way to the community in general. As a result the company which pursues such sustainable competitive strategies deserves to be labeled 'beautiful', since 'beauty is the essence of sustainable competitive advantage' (ibid:103).

There is certainly nothing wrong with these estimable goals demanded – but also predicted – of Dickinson's dream corporation. However, Dickinson's most extensive confirmation, the case of IKEA and its founder Ingvar Kamprad, hardly delivers confidence.[53] Kamprad's putative 'democratization' of furniture stylistics to the Greater Number is certainly worth assessing, but might be approached with a touch more skepticism regarding this occasionally richest man in the world. The embarrassing facts of Kamprad's own dalliance with earlier Swedish Nazi movements have wrung from Kamprad the obligatory mea culpa; but even without such revelations,

Dickinson, intrepid fan of stylistics and moral tones, should have been a bit more sensitive to the 'tonalities' of such völkisch lines as he himself cites from Kamprad: 'What we want, we can and will do. Together: A glorious future!' (Dickinson 2000: 114) *Marschieren wir?*

If there is nothing in Dickinson's work to guarantee the fiscal practicability – let alone, as he claims, the inevitability – of the 'evolutionary' turn to his beautiful corporation, a similar concern must be expressed about Virginia Postrel's *The Substance of Style*. Nonetheless, notwithstanding her tendency to pursue her stated aim – 'examining afresh the nature of aesthetic value and its relation to our personal, economic, and social lives' (Postrel, 2003: xi) – through phrases (from 'look and feel' to a rousing 'smart and pretty') whose cloying pertness actually obscures her more serious reflections, Postrel's work is theoretically more substantive and her overriding thesis that we are entering an 'aesthetic age' in which the 'aesthetic imperative is here to stay' worth serious scrutiny (Postrel 2003: 164).

By 'aesthetic' (or 'aesthetics') and 'aesthetic age' Postrel definitely does not intend a 'philosophy of art', nor does aesthetics include the 'meaning' even of poetry (although the 'sound' of poetry is 'arguably' acceptable), nor finally is aesthetics about beauty, since that would make it 'too limited' (Postrel 2003: 5-6). Rather Postrelian aesthetics concerns direct sensory, emotional reactions to precognitive stimuli that more often than not provoke pleasure. Central to her revision of aesthetics is a demotion – or democratization – of its bounds in order to bring in a multitude of features that in her view were prematurely excluded by the snobbism of a traditionalist aesthetics tied to high culture.

Postrel posits three marks of the new aesthetic age: the coexistence of different styles in our pluralistic, liberal, and formally tolerant culture; the primacy of environment or 'place' for focalizing the world of designs, brands and commodities (best exemplified by the Starbucks coffee chain); and the increasing stress on personal appearance (Postrel 2003: 9, 19, 24).[54] Particularly the easy availability of credit cards in the early 1970s followed by computerized data streamlining the consumption process and the burst of high tech and internet innovations of the 1990s that are 'particularly friendly' to aesthetic criteria (ibid: 49, 450, 52) has facilitated the cross-over to 'a new economic and cultural moment' ever since the 1980s (ibid: 39).[55]

Given this importance of the 'aesthetic imperative' – as she labels its admonitory component – it turns out to be not so surprising that Postrel's apparently minimalist approach toward the aesthetic gives way soon enough to acknowledgment that even an aesthetic limited to 'sensory elements that move or delight' must bring in the fact that humans are not only 'visual-tactile' but also 'social, pattern-making, tool-using creatures' (Postrel 2003: 33). This, in turn, entails the injection of 'meaning' into her calculus. If 'aesthetic value' is 'intrinsic', and 'meaning' is the source of such aesthetic value, it turns out that it is 'identity' which constitutes the very meaning of that source (ibid: 75, 95, 102, 104). Identity according to Postrel stands for a sense of the self which manifests itself; hence the 'aim of aesthetic meaning' is 'to turn our ineffable sense of self into something tangible and authentic' (ibid: 108-109).

It is at this point that Postrel's argument, reflecting the author's overlooking of much aesthetic philosophy since Kant, becomes jumbled in evocations of standards of 'what seems *right*' and demands that 'others' – society or other individuals – should 'see something *true* about who I really am' (Postrel 2003: 116, 108, emphasis added). Alas for further clarification, Postrel's contentions immediately get tied up with her confused reading of 'authentic' or 'authenticity',[56] and having abandoned any interest in the master category of beauty or the beautiful, Postrel has no alternative in facing the overall issue of genuine meaning within aesthetic value other than resorting to the familiar dichotomy between the 'shine' of aesthetic value and the 'substance' of moral value: 'aesthetic pleasure and moral virtue are independent goods' (ibid: 90).[57]

Yet throughout this same text Postrel's own passing comments serve to unsettle her stated parameters. Designs, she grants, can be 'comparatively attractive in some universal sense' (Postrel 2003: 107); 'making things beautiful can also make them work better' (ibid: 179); 'all other things being equal, we prefer beauty, just as we prefer intelligence, charm, eloquence, or talent' (ibid: 89). What Postrel wants to appropriate is nothing less than the Renaissance which fused art, science and personal refinement, a 'renaissance attitude' combining technology, science and beauty (ibid: 178): 'Can we recapture the wisdom of the Renaissance, learning again to accept a world that is smart *and* pretty?' (ibid: 182, emphasis in original)[58] This is all quite admirable, but there is no chance of even approaching a Renaissance profundity in these matters if one takes Postrel's otherwise dismissive and reductive approach toward the higher levels of aesthetic value that necessarily raise – as they certainly did for the original Renaissance – the theme of beauty.[59]

It would be unfair not to mention at the same time that notwithstanding such shortcomings, Postrel can be stimulating on a variety of empirical themes when she balances competing claims.[60] Yet an approach that remains content to locate the aesthetic 'on the margin' (e.g. Postrel 2003: 167, 168, 171) cannot but raise misgivings. Indeed, in the final analysis Postrel even contradicts her own earlier contention of the permanence of our aesthetic age by claiming that this 'aesthetic age won't last forever' (ibid: 189) as her 'age of look and feel' is topped by 'something else' (ibid: 190). Such turnabouts can only be explained by Postrel's consistent failure to appreciate the depth and range of the aesthetic in the first place. If the 'paradox' of aesthetics is, as she puts it, 'at once trivial and eternal' (ibid: 190), then it is clear that she has not sufficiently considered its 'eternal' component, just as she earlier failed to accommodate her thought to the 'truth' and 'rightness' of the 'self' which aesthetically manifests, at least in part, as something 'true' also for others.

Postrel is learned enough to know that in different epochs even 'poor people' built European cathedrals and constructed Tibetan sand paintings (Postrel 2003: 45), and she rightly wonders whether in contrast our 'aesthetic age' may leave posterity nothing more substantial than 'Rashid's curvy plastic trash cans' (ibid: 191). However, she does not draw the obvious inference that maybe this contrast simply accentuates the fact that we are not in an aesthetic age at all – unless, of course, we follow her lead of depriving the aesthetic of almost everything that gave it transcendent and luminous importance to less deliberately commodifying epochs.

6
"Hey! People! Listen Up! Ya gotta Schwung!"[61]

The preceding body of works carries one overriding virtue: if it does not necessarily prove that we are in a privileged age with regard to the ubiquity of the aesthetic for management and commodities, it does raise important problematizations that might have something worth offering in time on the relationship of management to the aesthetic dimension. Yet, while such literature is therefore encouraging, it is essential to build on the more serious theoretical formulations within them.

In this effort, what must be equally recalled is that the aesthetic dimension is a wider and looser category than the categories of art and the artwork which largely helped give birth originally to the development of aesthetic discursivities. The artwork, embodying the universal play that is responsible for the very existence of the human activity of play, encompasses the entire range of human production or productivity, but formally a simple typology of different kinds of such products would include at least (1) the artwork proper (the work of the artist), (2) the craftwork (the work of the artisan), and (3) the commodity (the work of the enterprise). Most of our contributors to an organizational aesthetics remain really concerned with the commodity level since it is the kind of product that is thoroughly embedded in an ongoing entrepreneurial or innovative process, and no matter how radically the commodity stretches its essence in directions extraneous to its character, it can never quite

constitute the next level, that of the craftwork or artisanship. For what makes a commodity a commodity is its membership in an industrial-productive system and process that cannot do away entirely with its own incentives of profit. Even if the presumably generous notion of value-creation is substituted for profit, very little if anything will have been conceptually achieved to free the commodity of its inner constraints. This is not to impugn the role of the commodity, especially in contemporary life; after all, the commodity process has been responsible for an unprecedented provision of resources, comforts and luxuries to at least a substantial portion of the global population.

Nonetheless, what immediately distinguishes the craftwork from the commodity is the former's imbeddedness not so much in profit or value-creation motivations as in what used to be celebrated as a 'calling' (*Beruf*) or vocation, something particularly well described by Austin and Devin in their account of 'ancient practices'.[62] The craft ethos is a guild ethos that minimizes, even where it cannot entirely do away with, profit concerns in its commitment to quality of production, to 'craft' in the full meaning of the term. We are certainly not in an age prioritizing such standards over production, although we can hope and expect, as do Dickinson and Postrel among others, that some of these craftly qualities will attach themselves to the commodity process.

But even the 'calling' of the artisan and the standard of guild practice are not the final, constitutive layer. The artwork – or the artist – is bound neither by profit/value-creation, nor by the dignity and moral ethos of the craftsperson, but by the simple spontaneity of a play that is content to justify itself precisely as such play.[63] To further understand the implications of this level we turn again to Guillet de Monthoux's work, the only project among those we have considered which has taken on the explicit task of developing an effective and relevant aesthetic theory related to play and artwork.

Guillet de Monthoux has built on Schiller's and Kant's insights into the aesthetic as focused on the 'free play' of human faculties whenever understanding and imagination are in a state of spontaneous openness or 'indeterminability' prior to being 'constrained' toward adopting either a cognitive or a moral stance, and on the centrality of this state of play for the standard of genuine humanness.[64] In turn the hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has widened the scope of Kant's and Schiller's insights to cover the very character of reality proper,[65] his formulations actually more in the spirit of Guillet de Monthoux's reading of the play drive (*Spieltrieb*) as a 'swinging bridge between form and substance', a 'weightless condition of Schwung, where the individual balances in the aesthetic seesaw between form and substance'.[66] Within this context the specific purpose of *human* play, according to Gadamer, is 'the ordering and shaping of the play-space' as such (*die Ordnung und Gestaltung der Spielbewegung*). Such 'ordering' allows the 'hither and thither' of the play movement to be released as if from itself, explaining the commonly-noted self-generation of play. It also means that whatever the specific ordering or shaping, the play movement tends to repetition and a continued, punctuated self-renewal (*Sich-Erneuern des Spieles*) which engraves its form on the specificities of the play movement.[67]

At this stage Gadamer himself defers to the speculations of his own teacher Martin Heidegger's 'ontological exposition of the horizon of time'. Thus the priority of the Schwung of nature becomes in effect an inquiry into the very meaning of time since, as the title of his magnum opus *Being and Time* promises, Martin Heidegger is famed for the degree to which his interpretation of human being (*Dasein*) necessarily attaches to the horizon of time as the key toward raising the ultimate philosophical question of being (*Sein*).[68] What is less commonly recognized is that Heidegger's stubborn pursuit of a new reading of originary time as timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) -- versus the commonplace notion of time as a sequential series of 'nows' -- culminates in exactly the same priority of Schwung that Guillet de Monthoux and Gadamer – themselves following in the wake of Kant and Schiller – have formulated.[69] If originary time or timeliness is the 'original unifying unity of the three ecstases of expectance [future], retention [past or has-been], and enpresenting [present]', as Heidegger exhaustively argues, it is because time as such invariably temporalizes (*zeitigen*), since it is in its essence the *ekstatikon*, that is, the 'outside-of-oneself' as such, the (non-spatially meant) stretch of tense or tension proper.[70] For Heidegger the 'being' of such 'ecstases' 'lies exactly in free ecstatic Schwung'.[71] Temporalizing 'is the free oscillation [*Schwingung*] of the original entire timeliness; time reaches [*erschwingt*] and contracts [*verschwingt*] itself'.[72] Thus at the very limit of originary reality Schwung is in fact the essence of time in its 'ecstatic unitary oscillation' [*Schwingung*].[73]

This complex account forms perhaps the most far-reaching philosophical justification of Schwung as the very 'being', so to speak, of originary time. Its relevance for our theme is that, just as Schwung culminates in time or timeliness, it no less lays out the originary basis for the *aisthesis* that serves as the lexical grounds for the modern word 'aesthetics'. If *aisthesis* as such derives from the Greek verbs *aistho/aisthomai/aisthanomai* (ἀΐσθω/ἀΐσθομαι/αἰσθάνομαι) meaning: 'breathing in, gasping', then the cosmic Schwung translates most effectively into the primordial human phenomenon of ongoing breath: of breathing-in and breathing-out as the human 'play' of liveliness without which there is, to be obviously frank, no life, let alone vivacity or *élan*.[74]

Phenomena which manifest or appear with the impact of a prominent or memorable emergence (characteristically labeled *Adventus* or *Parousia* in the relevant literature) provoke the involuntary intake of breath ('gasp') that corresponds to the proper translation for *aistho* (ἀΐσθω).[75] A gasp of this order 'stops', as it were, time itself – one is invariably 'breathless' before the emergence of the authentically beautiful – only to reconfirm through the very same register of that apparent stoppage the pulsating, palpitating nature of pure time itself as the play of the Aion, as the play of time's plenitude – its 'foreverness' (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). The Beautiful, in short, is that on behalf of which gasp (hence *aisthesis*) occurs. It goes without saying that such provocations to our everyday are more than just 'smart and pretty'; at the very least, they launch a thousand ships.

If, then, nature shows itself precisely as this purposeless, non-intentional, continually self-renewing play that is manifested in humans as the 'hither and thither' of *aisthesis*, it becomes no less, at least according to Gadamer, the 'model for art' (*Vorbild der Kunst*).[76] This is why the artist is often seen as irresponsible when compared to the craftsperson or entrepreneur. Yet that apparent irresponsibility reveals the full superiority of the

artwork and the comparative freedom intrinsic to its operations. The most direct human manifestation of the ontological priority of the Aion as universal play, artwork must invariably surpass and bracket both the craftwork and the commodity. For:

All holy plays of art are only distant imitations
of the eternal play of the universe,
of the eternally self-creating artwork.[77] //

NOTES

1. To mark out our subject matter, I resort to two terms. The first, 'organizational aesthetics', is derived from the chapter heading and references in 'Organizational Aesthetics, Experience and Plausibility', by Strati (1999), 9, the title of which book is however 'organization and aesthetics'. The second, 'the artful firm', is my amalgamation of 'art firm' by Guillet de Monthoux (2004) and 'artful making' by Austin & Devin (2003). The term 'aesthetic firm', by John Dobson (1999), is also relevant. I am grateful to Lee Devin for his comments and tips on an earlier version of this article.
2. Largely because concern has moved to the relation and opposition between the 'aesthetic' and the 'anti-aesthetic'. Cf., e.g., Foster (1983).
3. Cf. the useful introductory comments and references in Strati (1999), 4-7, regarding the early literature which seems to have come to a head in the late 1980s. Also Strati (2000), 25-26. Rafael Ramirez's Ph.D. dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley, concerning the 'beautiful in social organization' was completed under the supervision of C. West Churchman, a Berkeley philosopher linked to systems theory. Churchman's institute, the Center for Research in Management at the University of California, Berkeley, has since become the Institute of Management, Organization and Innovation (IMIO) under the directorship of David J. Teece. Ramirez (1991).
4. Guillet de Monthoux (2004), xi. In terms of my arrangement, it should be noted that although Pine & Gilmore (1999) belongs chronologically to this earlier stage, I shall be treating it under the later heading of theatrics as developed in a more sophisticated manner by Austin & Devin (2003).
5. Admitting that this term can mislead, Dobson also suggests: 'the ethics of excellence or the ethics of living' (127). The latter clearly resembles Michel Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence', which Stephen Cummings invokes as an 'alternative' to conventional business ethics. Cf. Cummings, 'Resurfacing an Aesthetics of Existence as an Alternative to Business Ethics', in Linstead & Höpfl (2000), 212-227.
6. Dobson (1999), 159. Also: 'The firm becomes a nurturing community, a polis' (132).
7. The aesthetic manager 'as artisan' is 'one motivated primarily by a desire to achieve excellence' (157). His/her *telos* is also described as 'the absolute Quality' (160).
8. As Dobson states, 'to the extent that they both represent the absence of modernity, the premodern and the aesthetic are one' (144).
9. Cf., e.g., Dobson (1999), 149, 175, 156. The crisis in the Technical and Moral Universes 'will result in the Aesthetic Universe becoming the dominant management paradigm of the twenty-first century' (167). Dobson still holds to this language in Dobson (2006).
10. Besides the major body of Chandlerian contributions (Chandler (1977), Chandler (1990)), cf. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., 'Corporate Strategy, Structure and Control Methods in the United States during the 20[1] Century', in Dosi, Teece & Chytry (2005), 381-401.
11. As MacIntyre himself puts it, 'Aristotle's conception of justice and practical rationality articulated the claims of one particular type of practice-based community, partially exemplified in the *polis*, while Acquinas', like Ibn Roshd's or Maimonides', expressed the claims of a more complex form of community in which religious and secular elements coexist within an integrated whole'. (MacIntyre 1988), 389. Unfortunately, this reading also betrays MacIntyre's pro-Christian (and even pro-Islamic) refusal to recognize the religiosity intrinsic to the Hellenic polis.
12. A vivid contrast to Aquinas and the scholastic tradition would be the positive contributions by the civic humanist and Florentine chancellor Leonardo Bruni to the new valorization of wealth-creation within the explicitly polis-committed ethos of the early Florentine Renaissance. This combination of wealth-creation and polis priorities is what distinguishes the Florentines no less from contemporary entrepreneurial ideologies. Cf. Bruni (1987), especially the editors' introduction, 3-46.
13. Indeed, its roots, Strati is quick to add, extend back to Ancient Greece. Strati (1999), 75. 'It is in fact the origins of this category (of the beautiful) in the pre-Socratic thought of ancient Greece and of Magna Graecia, in the polemics waged against Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle by the sophists and sceptics, and in the transformation of beauty from the equivalent of aesthetics into one of the numerous categories of aesthetics in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European philosophy, that constitutes both the mainstream and the cultural *humus* in which the contemporary aesthetic approach to organizations has developed" (122, emphasis in original). In the following analysis, I shall also cite Strati (2000) since the latter is a more succinct summary of Strati's positions.
14. Strati (2000), 20, 14, 24, 29, 30-31.
15. Strati (2000), 20, 24-25.
16. The outsider to the history of aesthetics is often unaware that besides the categories of the beautiful and the sublime, aesthetics was also originally concerned with the pictaresque. Cf., e.g., Hipple (1957).
17. Thus, in the core chapter of his book called 'The Beautiful in Organizational Life', Strati insists that when one of his businessmen sources talks of the 'beauty' of his organization, he should not be taken as making any artistic claims 'in the sense that he never declares that his organization is as beautiful as a work of art' (127). Rather, he is giving us expressions in 'ordinary language' that he habitually uses to evaluate the lived present; and interpretations of such language should stick to its imbeddedness, that is, the interpreter must not seek out 'objective' claims proposed on behalf of a given organization but should treat comments as manifestations of the imagination and synaesthetic capacities of his interviewee (as well as his own).

18. Strati's example of the two questions he consistently asks his interviewees in organizations connected with art photography – 'Do you do beautiful things?' and 'What is beautiful about the organization?' (140) – confines the range of empirical information to individuals who are primarily associated with activities touching on the arts and artisanship, thus leaving untested the presumed applicability of his approach to *all* organizations.
19. Strati (2000), 31.
20. The subject-matter of extensive aesthetic and cultural studies on such themes as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Adolf Loos, Cubism and the Bauhaus. A easy introduction is Janik & Toulmin (1973).
21. As an advocate of ancient Magna Graecia thinkers, Strati might wish to recall the primacy of 'Aphrodite' or 'Kupris' for such predecessors as Parmenides and Empedokles. Cf. the relevant citations in Chytry (2005), 143-144.
22. Such a strategy is perhaps hinted at by Strati's empirical dependence, notwithstanding the formal affirmations of his method, on art and artisanly operations.
23. E.g., Guillet de Monthoux occasionally familiarizes his canonical figures as 'entrepreneurs' with such gestures as describing Arthur Schopenhauer as 'Nietzsche's and Wagner's management professor' (97), Robespierre as 'management scientist of the Revolution' (154), 'Kant and Company' (325), as well as 'Fred Nietzsche' (xi), 'Freddy Schiller' (274) and 'Arty Schopenhauer' (353). There is also an unfortunate tendency to overpopulate his text with branding neologisms. Thus, while his reference to Joseph Beuys' 'social sculpture' is relevant, it seems far less applicable to Tony Blair's British Labour politics (273).
24. Schiller (1967). Although purely 'culturist' readers of Schiller prefer to underplay his political intentions, it is worth noting that the original version of this work in his journal *Die Horen* concluded with the promise that he intended to write a 'political constitution' (*Verfassung*) for his 'aesthetic state' (*ästhetischer Staat*), a promise which unfortunately was not fulfilled in subsequent issues of the journal (Schiller (1967), 300).
25. Guillet de Monthoux correctly calls Kant 'the founder of aesthetic philosophy' (97).
26. Schiller (1967), 214-219 (letter 27). Cf. also Chytry (1989).
27. Indeed, for all his apparent Germanophilism (excepting the unfairly pilloried G. W. F. Hegel), Guillet de Monthoux confesses that it is Dewey's 'aesthetic philosophy that is a grounding for the management perspective of this book' (44).
28. Guillet de Monthoux's Gadamarian truth-table changes accordingly: in the totalizing case, all four players 'arrow' in to the center ('art') in visual confirmation of the collapse of interaction, while in the banalization case, the arrows point outward toward each player in visual confirmation of narcissistic patterns of banalization.
29. It is not perfectly clear whether Guillet de Monthoux is claiming that these five forms are terms applicable to the varied historical shapes taken by the one art firm over different periods – starting with the avant-garde enterprises initiated by Richard Wagner's Bayreuth project and ending up with the postmod performances of Frank Castorf's Berlin Volksbühne – or that these five are in principle heuristically available options of the art firm, notwithstanding their sequential historical manifestations. At the very least this listing helps clarify a variety of enterprises to which Guillet de Monthoux rightly wishes to draw our attention.
30. Also the Parisian theatrical enterprises of André Antoine's Théâtre Libre and Aurelien Lugné's Théâtre de L'Oeuvre as well as art dealer Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler with his stable of modernist artists: 'in this laboratory-art firm, Braque and Picasso worked as contracted research-artists for a dealer-critic, their gallerist Kahnweiler' (135). For Wagner as business manager and entrepreneur, cf. 117 and also Chytry (2007). Regarding the importance of Wagner, Guillet de Monthoux calls the art firm 'today's bastard child of Greek tragedy' (94).
31. Examples include French painter Jean-Louis David's ventures in Jacobin festivities as well as Stanislavski's (Constantin Alexeyev) joint-stock company and Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev's Russian Ballet.
32. Examples include the Berlin Freie Volksbühne and such original directors as Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator, as well as the 'Swedish art corporation' and its Stadsteatern starting with Alf Sjöberg and continuing with Suzanne Osten – through the new CEO Vivien Bandler (202, 214, 218. 239, 242, 246).
33. Unfortunately, since Guillet de Monthoux's only concrete example is in fact Beuys' own career, this category is the least transparent for analysis. Besides a somewhat separate treatment of the sociology of Georg Simmel in this section, there is only the single passing reference to 'the work of socially engaged artists such as Hans Haacke' (267).
34. Guillet de Monthoux calls these composite results a 'socially engaged flux firm' (253). Fundamentally though, the 'flux firm' is little more than Beuys as a consciously 'living brand' (255), 'brand manager', or 'concept developer' whose artwork is meant to function as 'flux-firm models for aesthetic power plants' (262).
35. Eventually such events spilled out beyond the traditional auditorium to encompass squares and housing blocks. Also included are the GDR playwright Heiner Müller and the American mise en scène 'star' Robert Wilson. The author was himself an active witness to much of this part of his account.
36. Pine and Gilmore's subtitle is in fact: 'Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage'.
37. Co-author Rob Austin is a participant in Guillet de Monthoux's CD 'Liedership: Franz Schubert Schwungsongs for Aesthetic Management'. Guillet de Monthoux (2006).
38. The reader of management literature may wish to compare this resultant 'sense of space' (42) with the Zen concept of 'ba' promulgated by Nonaka and Konno (1998) and Ikujiro Nonaka, Noburu Konno & Ryoko Toyama, 'Emergence of 'Ba': A Conceptual Framework for the Continuous and Self-Transcending Process of Knowledge Creation', in Nonaka & Nishiguchi (2001): 13-29.
39. According to the authors we need to move beyond the comparatively simple 'work as theatre' of the experience-economy level to 'an important shift' in which customers themselves learn to 'act' and the customer becomes 'the product' as such (194-195).
40. Thus: 'perfecting people falls under the province of God, the Author and Perfecter of our faith rather than in the domain of human business" (206). This Pauline telos to Pine and Gilmore's particular 'story' should have been detected at the very outset – the dedication of the book is after all 'To the Author and Perfecter of our faith' – but the articulations of their concluding raptures, anchored in their 'personal belief" that even 'transformations are only temporal states for the eternalities they glorify', at least underscore for us the transient commitment of their book to the entire thesis of work as theatre (206). It should be noted that the connection between the theme of caring or care and management has been already made by management interpreters of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to the extent that the latter is grounded in the thematics of Care (*Sorge*). Cf., e.g., Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus (1997).
41. Schmitt & Simonson (1997), esp. 'Aesthetics: The New Marketing Paradigm', 3-25.
42. Schmitt, Rogers & Vrotsos (2004), 239.
43. One of the authors is a practicing dramaturg, actor and playwright with extensive experience in a theatre company while the other author is a Harvard management professor. The company is the People's Light and Theatre Company of Malvern, Pennsylvania (Lee Devin informs me that the theatre has recently dropped the word 'Company' from its name).
44. The authors subscribe to this particular way of designating present computer technology priorities. Cf. the Manifesto for Agile Software Development (38).
45. Indeed they bring up helpful breathing exercises to urge along the process of concentrated relaxation, a familiar move in conventional Buddhist practices.
46. Aware of the obvious objections, the authors repeatedly deny that they are endorsing an 'anything goes' agenda (89, 97).
47. Lee Devin emphasizes that this act is *not* a metaphor, 'it's the fact'. He adds: 'This feature of drama, which it shares with dance and music, is a key to understanding. It's also a feature of any service....Delivering a car to me when I need a rental – that service exists only as executed.' Personal communication.
48. Of course, the authors continuously emphasize how practical their project really is. A whole chapter on the 'fiscal responsibility' of artful making presumably will reassure more rigid mentalities that theatrical enterprises are like venture capital planning and investing since both ultimately depend on 'casting', securing the appropriate people for effective risk-sharing (149-160). Moreover, rehearsal and theatre financing have never been separate from firm performance deadlines and profit results, at least in principle. Thus, even in their final paeans to the vocation of work as play, the authors make sure to note that beyond the intrinsic rewards to artful makers there will be external results which are 'yes, highly profitable' (180). Profit may arise through newer, econometrically more updated, categories of 'innovation and real value creation', but it will remain profit nonetheless.
49. This seems particularly the case when the authors start bringing in practices like breathing exercises and rehearsal tips. Such suggestions can be accommodated within more conventional management approaches as at best an occasional relief from the more pressing demands of workmanship and innovation in such fast-paced industries as agile software development.
50. Statements presumably grounded in the author's 'atheist, Darwinist perspective' range from such evolutionary cretinisms as: 'those that did like spending time interacting with idiots all died', to the deliciously inane: 'Nature has equipped us with instincts that can, eventually, snuff out Nazis' (9, 8).
51. In fact the best part of the book is the inset of color illustrations of various exemplars of contemporary corporate design.
52. I put aside the question of whether the author thinks that this has always been the case or that the beautiful corporation is a new phenomenon; certainly he regards it as a 'new' beauty (98).
53. After a perfunctory description of IKEA operations that could have been penned by an IKEA publicist, Dickinson simply ends up quoting at length from Kamprad's soporific 1976 manifesto *The Testament of a Furniture Dealer* without remotely bothering to draw on third-person evaluations and studies of both Kamprad and IKEA.

54. Postrel later repeats: 'places, the touchstone of our aesthetic era' (123). Her invocation of 'immersive environments' (123) recalls the language of Pine and Gilmore. Postrel does grant that such factors were present earlier – interestingly citing a 1927 article by Elmo Calkins called 'Beauty the New Business Tool' to this effect – but contends that what is different today is their pervasiveness (34-35).
55. Also: 'a major ideological shift' (11); a 'turning point' and 'critical mass' (39).
56. Postrel denigrates the "authentic" as an 'objective' category, overlooking that its original introduction into the philosophical literature by Martin Heidegger as *Eigentlichkeit* aimed precisely to bring an 'ownness' (*eigentlich*) or individual owning up into philosophical discussion, thus giving rise to subsequent existentialist thought. Astonishingly Postrel insists that the authenticity literature had removed the 'subject' (113) and she eventually provides her own presumably original reading of the 'authentic'.
57. Also: 'Rhetoric that treats aesthetic quality as a mark of goodness and truth – or as a sign of evil and deception – is profoundly misleading' (89). Not surprisingly Postrel therefore comes up with the postmodernist version of the moral conundrum of the 'beauty' of acts of destruction which carry nefarious human consequences. If the older version invoked the 'pleasurable' sights of air bombings, Postrel brings up the spectacular case of 9-11 images (91). That the theoretical problem might be at least lessened by a different -- less impoverished -- reading of aesthetic value eludes Postrel (no less than traditional 'aestheticization of politics' critics), even though such readings are at the origins of the aesthetic philosophizing launched by Kant and Schiller.
58. In giving content to her standard of 'smart and pretty', Postrel even takes the giant step of invoking Galileo Galilei himself: apparently 'his work was smart *and* pretty' (170, emphasis in original).
59. That such profundity does not reject but easily absorbs the Postrelian 'look and feel' approach toward the aesthetic can be confirmed by Schiller's own extensive approbation and account of the ongoing human 'delight in semblance (or shine)' (*die Freude am Schein*). Schiller (1967), 193 (Letter 26). Obviously a theory that celebrates play as the key to being human can hardly be regarded as oblivious to Postrel's concerns.
60. I mention Postrel's treatment of 'design boundaries' as a refreshing adjudication between excessive regulation and no control in 'The Boundaries of Design', 122-163., as well as her speculation that increasing investment in aesthetics can be difficult to gauge in conventional economic measurements, culminating in her sensible recommendation to conceptualize an economy where sources of value 'are also sensory and expressive' (174-176).
61. From the inside jacket of the musical CD by Guillet de Monthoux (2006).
62. My inclusion of the German word is meant to serve as a reminder of Max Weber's classical sociological readings of the function of vocation.
63. It should be noted that claims of a hierarchy ruling the productive trinity of artwork/ craftwork/ commodity are not claims on behalf of hierarchy in society proper. As in the case of classical Athenian culture, the supremacy of the artwork and craftwork (over the commodity) may often go with a greater social equality (*demokratia*).
64. Curiously, although Guillet de Monthoux's inspiration for Schwung is Schiller, the latter did not in fact generally employ the word itself. Instead, he regularly invoked 'free movement' (*Gang*), 'reciprocal action' (*Wechselwirkung*), and 'oscillation' (*Schwankung*); above all he is rightly renowned for introducing to the philosophical literature the related notion of 'play' (*Spiel*): 'Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays'. Schiller (1967), 106, 107.
65. Gadamer's reflections on the 'way of being of play' (*Seinsweise des Spieles*) are located in the section 'Play as Indicator of the Ontological Explication' in Gadamer (1972), 97-127, the most important part for our observations being 'The Concept of Play', 97-105.
66. Guillet de Monthoux (2004), 19-20. The author even provides an illustration of someone on a swing. His first use of the word Schwung occurs in his account of the sculptor Joseph Beuys' *The Crucifixion* regarding the "Schwung" between its two poles of energy of 'idea' and 'substance' (6).
67. Gadamer (1972), 103, 100. For Gadamer human play simply belongs to an overall process in nature (*Naturvorgang*), and this process lacks any underlying substrate or subject preceding play as such: in other words, play is the execution of the movement (*Vollzug der Bewegung*) characterizing *all* nature and reality. Like Guillet de Monthoux, Gadamer then pinpoints the precise character of this movement as the 'hither and thither of the movement of play' (*Hin und Her der Spielbewegung*) which opens up a play-space (*Spielraum*), the boundary and shape of the particular site of the specific play which is itself bound by a universal outside that Gadamer calls 'the limits of free space' (*die Grenzen des freien Raumes*). Gadamer (1972), 102. Sometimes Gadamer describes this 'hither and thither' as 'tense' or 'taut' (*spannungsvoll*) (101).
68. Gadamer (1972), 116. Cf. also Gadamer, 'The Timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) of the Aesthetic' (115-122).
69. It is worth noting that Heidegger's students included not only Gadamer but also his assistant Eugen Fink who subsequently wrote at length on 'play as symbol of the world' (*Spiel als Weltsymbol*), drawing partly on the play reflections of Friedrich Nietzsche. Cf. Fink (1960) and Fink (2003).
70. Heidegger (1978), 264. Intrinsically 'outside' any possible object or sets of objects, timeliness is no less intrinsically open as such, its horizon necessarily making up the 'pen expanse' (*offene Weite*) toward which its own carrying-away or remotion is as such outside of itself.
71. Heidegger (1978), 268. He specifically likens this notion to Henri Bergson's concept of *élan*. Compare to note 58 above.
72. Heidegger in fact links the primordiality of Schwung to his key existential notions of throw, thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and projection (*Entwurf*). Heidegger (1978), 268.
73. Indeed, such oscillation carries an 'upswing' (*Überschwung*) that 'swings in' the very possibility of 'world' or 'worlding' (*Welten*) for humans (*Dasein*). Heidegger (1978), 269, 270.
74. Following Onians (1988), 74-75, in his penetrating move between the meanings of a later 'I perceive' (thus the commonplace philosophical reading of *aisthesis* as perception or senses) and an earlier 'I breathe (in), gasp', both meanings centered on the Homeric and Attic Greek verb *aio* (ἀΐω). The emphasis on breathing in or gasping is unique to Onians; generally Greek lexicons simply translate the verb as 'breathing' or 'breathing out'.
75. And its middle voice *aisthanomai* (αἰσθάνομαι).
76. Gadamer (1972), 101.
77. Friedrich Schlegel, cited by Gadamer (1972), 101.

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Josef Chytry
University of California, Berkeley
and California College of the Arts
F 402 IMIO
Haas School of Business #1930
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-1930
USA

chytry@haas.berkeley.edu

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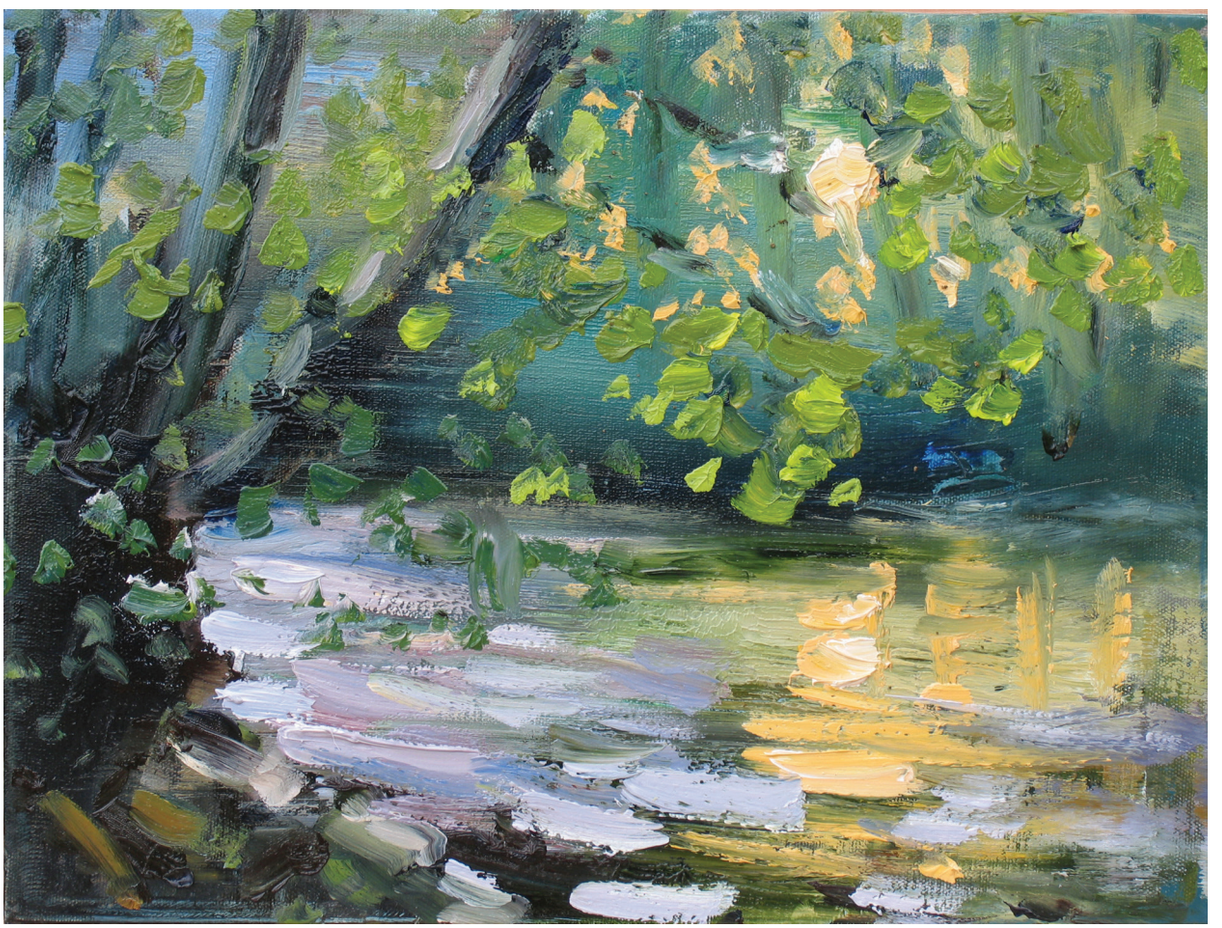

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